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A

LETTER

TO THE

AUTHOR OF CHRISTIANITY

Not FOUNDED ON

ARGUMENT, &c.

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By a young GENTLEMAN of *Cambridge*.

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*Prov.* xix. 2. Also that the Soul be without Knowledge, it is not good. —

*¶ Pet.* iii. 15. — And be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you the Reason of the Hope that is in you; —

— Beatus autem sine Virtute nemo potest, nec Virtus sine Ratione constare, —

*CICERO De Natur. Deor.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed; and Sold by J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*.  
M.DCC.XLII.

[Price Six-pence.]





A

# LETTER TO THE AUTHOR, &c.

SIR,



REFACES and Preliminaries are generally Impositions on the Time and Patience of the Reader. I therefore proceed without any Address, to consider the material Points of your Letter.

IN your Title, "The true Principle of "Gospel-Evidence is assigned." What this Principle is, and whether you are real and in earnest, in what you have advanced relating to it, may hereafter be considered. Your Labour and Concern seem chiefly employed in order to disturb the Security and Satisfaction we have received from the best Defences of Christianity.

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The Truth and Consistency of your own Sentiments are not easy to be collected.

It is said <sup>a</sup>, " That Opinions, founded on " Prejudice and Ignorance, are not the Truth " which the Gospel requireth at our Hands." But when you are near the Conclusion of your Performance, you assert <sup>b</sup>, " If we do but once " heartily and truly believe, it is a very invidious as well as superfluous Distinction, to " concern ourselves about, whether we know " upon what Grounds we believe, or not." In the Affair of Faith, Truth and Falshood, Right and Wrong, are, according to this Doctrine, empty Sounds. If we attain to the Warmth and Vigour of Believing, tho' by the most blind and enthusiastical Methods, it will bring with it cordial Peace, and Assurance of Mind. Of what Use and Advantage is such Doctrine as this to Mankind? Are Ignorance, Positiveness and Presumption, such amiable Qualities, as to deserve all possible Encouragement? Are there Appearances of Aversion to such Lessons, sufficient to excite the Industry and Address of so able a Master?

WRITERS of your Rank should have stronger Apprehensions of Mischief, from the Folly and Fury which naturally attend Ignorance, Bigotry, and presumed Inspiration, than from the Spirit and Temper of the Rationalist. To preserve a Sense of Religion among Mankind, is surely, in some Degree, necessary to the Peace and Welfare of Society. And if we believe the supreme Being hath interposed in this Affair, it becometh us to suppose, he hath done it in a wise and worthy Manner. In all the

<sup>a</sup> Page 6.      <sup>b</sup> Page 114.

the Constructions we make of his declared Will and Pleasure, with Regard to our Faith and Practice, nothing evidently dishonourable is to be allowed. Reflections of this Kind have engaged good and wise Men to ascribe Righteousness to their Maker, and to endeavour to bring a good Report on pure and undefiled Religion.

You ask<sup>a</sup>? "Can a Man be baptized into " a rational Religion?" By commenting on the Form of Baptism in our Church, you endeavour to establish the Negative; which you conclude with,—" Yet such is the Pleasure " and Ordinance of God himself in this Point." All this is said as if the Whole of your Account was expressly revealed in the *New Testament*. The Forms and Modes of Worship, the Manner of administering the Sacraments, and Definitions and Decrees relating to Doctrines, as far as they are human Appointments, do not belong to our Consideration. With original Christianity only is our present Concern. But to your Question: Was there ever in the World a Religion which deserved the Name of rational? Have there not been, in many Religions, several Things very fitting and reasonable, tho' attended with many and shocking Absurdities? Hath not the Christian Religion as fair and just a Pretence as any other to be deemed rational? Where is the Absurdity of the Relations and Friends of Infants dedicating them to the Service of God, and engaging to bring them up in the Fear and Reverence of their Maker, and in all the Virtues and Duties which become us as social Beings? Happy would it be for Man, in his present

sent and future State, were these Promises duly regarded by those whose Business it is to instruct, and did good Instructions make a lasting and proper Impression when they are given.

THE material and most important Particulars of Religion, are Truths allow'd and acknowledged by all; Atheists excepted. As for distinguishing Points; true it is, they are, by all Parties, more eagerly and industriously inculcated than the weightier Matters of the Law. By a Zeal for these, have not Men in all Ages and Places of the World attained to high Fame and Reputation? A proper Distinction and Separation is not to be expected from the Bulk of Mankind. Their Heads are only turned to the confused Sound of Words. And when this is owing to the Want of Capacity and Opportunity, they are excusable before the great Ruler of the Universe, who only expects Returns according to the Talents we have received. As for those who by their State and Condition are in full Possession of the Means of Information, on them it is incumbent to review the Suggestions of Education, and to practise Care and Impartiality in the important Affair of Religion.

YOUR Account of believing is terrible and affecting <sup>a</sup>. " The great Command to believe " is peremptory, and absolute. No Condi- " tions in the Case that we shall believe if we " have Time, if we have Abilities, &c." This will be the more terrible, if extended to all Articles of Belief, which have been received in the Christian World. But God hath only required what is short, plain, and evidently connected with our Duty. Express Intimations of the

<sup>a</sup> Page 23.

the Allowance of Excuses are not necessary from a wise and good Lawgiver. Instances of these being real and not affected, are not so common as is supposed. A careless and secure World is to be strongly and positively summoned to its Duty ; but when such real Incapacities intervene, from the Knowledge we have of the divine Perfections, we may be satisfied there will be a gracious Allowance. What you urge<sup>a</sup>, doth not alter the Satisfaction we have in this Way of Thinking.

IT is observed<sup>b</sup>, " That the Instructions of " Parents represent all future Discoveries and " Alterations as something beyond measure " heinous and detestable." This is indeed true too commonly in Fact, but not founded on any Authority, either of natural or revealed Religion.

WITH the following Account of the Purpose of Prayer we are entertained<sup>c</sup>; " But if " Prayer be the effectual Means proposed for " the attaining the Perfection of our Faith, " there is a strong Presumption too, that our " Labours of every Kind were to be spared " throughout the whole Progress ; and that it " was to be introduced after a like Manner, by " Methods purely divine, and without any of " our Assistance."

WHEREVER there have been Acknowledgments of a Deity, Applications by Prayer have been the certain Consequence. Weak and mistaken Devotees have often strongly presumed, that their Labours of every other Kind were to be spared. But such Presumptions have been ever regarded, by all sober-minded

<sup>a</sup> Page 44, 45, &c.

<sup>b</sup> Page 12.

<sup>c</sup> Page 10.

minded Persons, as wholly unreasonable. We read<sup>a</sup>, "The Way of Man is not in himself, " it is not in Man that walketh to direct his "Steps." Again<sup>b</sup>, "Commit thy Works unto "the Lord." --- We are also to "be careful "for nothing."<sup>c</sup> Are we then to express our Obedience to such Instructions, by shutting our Eyes, and taking no Heed to our Paths; by being careless and negligent in all our Affairs, and expecting constant Relief and Assistance from Heaven in a miraculous Manner? Far from this, we are to take heed to our Ways, to walk circumspectly, and by Labour and Diligence to provide for Things honest in the Sight of all Men.

AND is not all this Reasoning equally valid, when applied to religious Affairs? Are we not to meditate on these Things, to use our best Judgment and Understanding, in order to procure proper Notices? In Return for your Form here suggested; I will venture to offer another, consistent with my present Design; --- Give me, O God, a constant Affection and Value for Truth. May none of my Pursuits be obstructed by Prejudice, Interest, or any corrupt Affection. Let me not be unduly influenced by the Fear and Reverence of Man; nor by any injurious Apprehensions of thee, as a severe and partial Being. My true Glorying is to understand and know thee to be the Lord; to believe and to practise the important Particulars of natural and revealed Religion. As thou hast given me Abilities and Powers, to think and to reason about these Things, may I employ them in the most upright and conscientious

<sup>a</sup> *Jerem. x. 23.*

<sup>b</sup> *Prov. xvi. 2.*

<sup>c</sup> *Phil. iv. 6.*

tious Manner. In order utterly to discourage such Measures, from *Page 13* to *15*, we are told, “ That settling Doubts is precarious — “ likely to take up too much Time — and a “ rational Faith may not come time enough to “ regulate our Practice.” Are then the useful Particulars of Piety and Virtue not to be known without long and tedious Inquiries? Is the Knowledge of the Difference betwixt Good and Evil difficult and uncertain in its Attainment? Is the Faith which enableth us to overcome the World inconsistent with Reasoning and Inquiring? How soon may we satisfy ourselves of the Reasonableness of that Faith which engageth us to believe that God is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him? I do not mean that every one is capable of accurately apprehending the Proofs of his Being *à Priori* or *à Posteriori*: But the Notion of a Being, who made and governeth the World, and who will, since he doth it not here, hereafter make a proper Distinction betwixt the Good and the Evil, is obvious and natural. If Men live without God in the World, in Christian Countries, where this Knowledge is easy to be attained, it is because their Hearts are brutal and corrupt. They love Darknes, because their Deeds are evil. This is the Case, because “ they will not know, they will not “ consider.” But to Thinking, Consideration, and Knowledge, by you, all Miscarriages in Christianity are ascribed.

WE have already observed, that all our present Concern is with pure and simple Christianity; and not to account for Difficulties added by religious Establishments. You are not therefore

fore to expect any Remarks on the Article concerning good Works done before Faith; Part of which is quoted *Page 15.* If there are Texts which seem to countenance so harsh a Doctrine, these Appearances should be corrected by such as afford positive Evidence to the contrary. Thus, <sup>a</sup> “God is no Respecter of Persons.”---And, <sup>b</sup> “Glory, Honour and Peace, to every Man that worketh Good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no Respect of Persons with God.” *Page 16,* will be considered hereafter.

It is said, <sup>c</sup> “That Religion therefore can never be a Thing to be taught, that it must needs be something that does not require Time to attain.”---The Father of our Spirits, by sending his Spirit into our Hearts, can in an Instant turn the most Profligate and Disobedient from the Folly of Iniquity to the Wisdom of the Just. However, this is far from being the common and constant Method of ceasing to do Evil, and learning to do well. But when it is so, surely we may employ the remaining Part of Life in learning many material Particulars relating to Religion.

WHAT is advanced, <sup>a</sup> “As to few Men being qualified for Reasoning”,---“and the Generality’s being formed entirely with a View to active Life”,---are Truths readily allowed. But must your young Gentleman therefore captivate his Understanding to the Obedience of a blind and an implicit Faith? You allow, “Mr. Addison’s evincing beyond all

<sup>a</sup> *Act 10. 34.*

<sup>b</sup> *Rom. ii. 10, 11.*

<sup>c</sup> *Page 17.*

<sup>\*</sup> *Page 17, 18, &c.*

“ all Contradiction, the Veracity of the sacred Writings and Mission.” ---And at the same Time labour to prove your not being obliged to “ apprehend and believe.” “ Demonstrative doubtless it is, but what is that to me, who have not the Talents requisite to enter into Demonstration?” This is further illustrated by the Instance of Musick, and the Case of him who wants both Taste and an Ear. Needless are all these Arguings; for Impossibilities are not expected from us, either by God or by any reasonable Man; and perfect Incapacity affordeth a perfect Excuse. Mr. *Addison*’s Piece, *The Excellent Analogy*, and other Performances of the same Rank, were never intended for common Readers, and yet may have their Use and Significancy.

You truly observe, “ How much Prejudice---a thousand strong Impressions---natural Attachments to Customs, Persons and Things---Notions familiarized, &c.” disqualify for fair Reasoning. But then, in Places where Freedom and Liberty of Debate are allowed, there are considerable Balances in the other Scale.

THE solemn Decrees of Authority are suspected; every thing is eagerly and carefully examined, and disadvantageous Reports industriously published. Men have a Pride and a Pleasure in separating themselves from the Vulgar; such is the Value they have for Distinction and Regard.

FROM Page 24 to 25, many Things are offered to prove, that a rational Faith, when

attained, would not answer the End. --- " It  
" would prove too cold." --- If Knowledge re-  
forms and correcteth the Heat and Positiveness  
which attendeth conceited Ignorance, are we  
thus reduced to a faulty Disposition? Do we  
thus judge of Mens Temper and Behaviour in  
temporal Affairs? " The Wrath of Man work-  
" eth not the Righteousness of God." It doth  
not promote that right and equal Behaviour  
wherein true Goodness consisteth. Your " lau-  
" dable Warmth" --- And " resenting with a  
" becoming Ardour" --- naturally lead into  
inhuman and persecuting Measures. Coolness,  
on which you bestow so many Reproaches, is  
more likely to dispose us to Humility and  
Meekness than your laudable Qualities. Now  
" the Meek will he guide in Judgment, and  
" such will he teach his Law."

YOUR next Reproach on a rational Faith is,  
\* " That it would prove too changeable." ---  
Changeableness, when properly understood and  
explained, doth not contain in it the terrible  
Objections which you suggest. The practical  
Points of Christianity being plain and evident,  
as to these there can be no Alteration, when  
we are resolved to be and to do Good. But in  
the whole System of Religion, there are many  
Particulars which have ever been, and ever will  
continue to be the Subject of Debate and Con-  
troversy.

READING and Meditation must make very  
important Alterations in the uncorrect and con-  
fused Notions which are entertained at first.  
There are few, who ever think at all, who  
have attained so perfectly to your recommended

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Ignorance and Obedience of Thought, as to be exempted from many Changes in their real inward Sentiments. Would there not be an End of all Wondering and Clamouring about Changing, did we duly consider how wide and extended the Bounds of probable, and how narrow those of positive Knowledge and Belief are?

How strong is your Caution against all Attempts towards exercising our Understandings?

<sup>a</sup> " The very presuming we have a Right to call these Matters to a Re-hearing, and Abilities to decide in them for ourselves, is an effectual Step taken towards throwing off all that obsequious Awe and Dependance which is the Life of this Cause."

THIS Remark is suited to the Cause of Superstition and Absurdity, not to the Cause of a Religion communicated by the Father of Lights, and worthy of all Acceptance, by Creatures capable of knowing their Master's Will.

A FURTHER Objection is, <sup>b</sup> " The rational Believer cannot promise to himself the Satisfaction of Mind, resulting from the Faith for which you contend." But will not the contrary be found true? When Reason is added to Religion, we are qualified to enlighten the Darkness of our most gloomy Horrors. We can reflect on the Promises and Perfections of God; on the Condition and Circumstances of human Beings. Whereas, the Vigour of Enthusiasm being broken by calamitous Accidents, the Mind sinks down into the deepest Despair, and is incapable of making any Efforts. Who hath

hath the justest Expectation of Relief from Heaven, in the dismal Moments of Life, the Man who hath employed all the Powers and Faculties of his Mind, in order to know and serve his Maker ; or another, who hath worked himself up into the Fulness of Assurance from a groundless Confidence ?

WHAT is advanced in the last Place <sup>2</sup>, is most surprising, --- " No Conviction, drawn from Reasoning, can ever have Force enough to make us virtuous against our Inclinations." --- But will Conviction, without Reasoning, be of greater Efficacy ? When we are convinced God Almighty hath a Right to oblige us to a virtuous Behaviour ; when, besides this, we are satisfied, how fit and reasonable the Practice of Virtue is, and the Avoiding of Vice ; are not such Considerations the true Methods of subduing our evil Inclinations ? When Men will not attend unto, when they will not be influenced by such easy and sure Notices, they have no Cloak for their Sins. The ceasing to do Evil, the learning to do well, the Beginning of and the Progress in Goodness is managed in this Manner. Such are the divine, and such are human Instructions. Therefore is the Appeal to our natural Sense ; " Consider and shew yourselves Men, O ye Transgressors ! " They who will thus fix their Thoughts, will gain Resolutions ; and by Practice, such a Relish, as will produce a Change in their Inclinations. This is the Part we are to act ; to which, if we attend with Care and Sincerity, what is wanting will be supplied by the Father of our Spirits. The Instructions, the Pro-

Promises and Threatnings of the *New Testament*, afford us great and important Assistances. To Mens being wholly influenced by sensual Desires, and absolutely refusing to think and consider, we must ascribe the small Success these Motives have had. You proceed, <sup>a</sup> “ If this rational “ Faith will not serve us even defensively--much “ less will it, to produce a faithful Martyr.” The primitive Martyrs had indeed miraculous Aid of Assurance and Resolution. Peculiar Supports have been afforded to good Men since in like Circumstances. But there have been Instances, where the pure Love of Truth, and sincere Regards to Honesty and Integrity, have determined Men to lay down their Lives, with great Firmness and Resolution. Before the Appearance of Christianity, Pains and Penalties were rarely inflicted on Dissenters among the Heathens; we might else have had many other suffering Heroes besides *Socrates*. Instances of Infidels and Hereticks, being Martyrs to those Opinions of the Truth of which they professed to be persuaded, are known and undeniable. Why must the Evidences for Christianity be supposed wholly ineffectual? Are they who have applied Reason to Religion, by such Habits of Thinking, disposed to an undue Love of Life and the World? Why should they be eager, a little to prolong a vain and short Duration, on mean and unworthy Terms? Are the trifling and unsatisfying Objects of Sense indeared to them by such Speculations?

“ <sup>b</sup> You propose to make it plain from “ Scripture, that no such Appeal to the Un- “ derstanding was actually ever made or in- “ tended.”

“ tended.” <sup>a</sup> “ Did he lay the Arguments and  
“ Proofs of his Mission before his Disciples?  
“ --- No such Matter. For his Part, he taught  
“ them as one having Authority. --- If he had  
“ taken the other Method, they knew nothing  
“ of Reasoning.” Did not he do thus to his  
Own, when he practised this Condescension to  
the Disciples of *John* the Baptist? <sup>b</sup> “ Go and  
“ shew *John* again those Things which ye do  
“ hear and see: The Blind receive their Sight,  
“ and the Lame walk; the Lepers are cleansed,  
“ and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised up,  
“ and the Poor have the Gospel preached to  
“ them.”

His Authority was not affected and assumed, but was really inherent in him, and effectually expressed and exerted. Being supernaturally qualified to touch the Heart, and enlighten the Understanding, human Arts of Instruction were vain and superfluous. They did not want human Wisdom, having the encouraging Promise “ of a Mouth and Wisdom, which all  
“ their Adversaries should not be able to gain-  
“ say <sup>c</sup>.” What can be more proper and conclusive than his reasoning about the Woman who had seven Husbands <sup>d</sup>? The Apostles readily and willingly entered into several Sorts of Reasoning, proper to the Persons with whom they were concerned. <sup>e</sup> “ He disputed  
“ in the Synagogue with the *Jews*, and with  
“ devout Persons, and in the Market daily  
“ with them that met with him.” <sup>f</sup> “ He  
“ reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath,  
“ and persuaded the *Jews* and the *Greeks*.”

<sup>a</sup> “ He

<sup>a</sup> Page 36 & 37. <sup>b</sup> Matth. xi. 4, 5. <sup>c</sup> Luke xxi. 15.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xx. 34, 35, 36. <sup>e</sup> Acts xvii. 17. <sup>f</sup> Acts xviii. 4.

“ He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.” Such as these are material Particulars belonging to Faith: Moral Qualities are not then opposite to Faith, and we are to reason Men into their Duty. So also to our Purpose, “ And be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you.”

WHAT has been suggested will, I hope, be considered as a sufficient Reply to what is advanced till we come to *Page 46*. But before I proceed, a short Notice must be taken of the following Passage; “ The Pharisees tempting asked him a Sign—He sighed deeply at their Perverseness—and stiled them a foolish and an adulterous Generation for their Presumption.” Upon a Review, surely you will not insist on what is here offered being to your Purpose: The Case was this<sup>a</sup>; when he had cast out a Devil which was dumb, some maliciously and unreasonably imputed this to *Beelzebub*, others tempting him, asked him a Sign from Heaven; *i. e.* they were not satisfied with the earthly Signs of his Power in casting out Devils, but called on him to produce some wonderful Appearances from Heaven. Now, to such petulant and saucy Demands, of evil-minded Persons, his Denial and Reproof were very proper.

“ You assure us Miracles were not meant as Arguments.” Let us attend to the Particulars you have advanced from hence to *Page 51*. As Miracles have been performed by false Prophets,

<sup>a</sup> *Acts xxiv. 25.*

<sup>b</sup> *1 Pet. iii. 15.*      <sup>c</sup> *Page 37, 38.*  
<sup>d</sup> *Luke xi. 14, &c.*      <sup>e</sup> *Ver. 16.*      <sup>f</sup> *Page 46.*

phets; simply considered, and without proper Qualifications and Circumstances, it is not pretended they can produce a full and proper Evidence: But when they have these, do not therefore become trifling and insignificant.

AT Page 47, " You alledge, that this Evidence was in Strictness, but the natural Effect of their Doctrine, instead of any supernatural Proof of its Veracity." In this Light you would have us regard the casting out of Devils and healing the Sick. The former is represented in Scripture, as a freeing Men from mental and bodily Disorders, with which they were supposed to be affected by the Adversary of Mankind, rather than delivering them from his vicious and immoral Influences.

BESIDES, in the many beneficial Cures which he performed, the Nature of the Fact is not so much to be regarded, as the Manner of the Performance; these Things were done with a Word, and in an Instant, which are evident Proofs of a supernatural Efficacy.

<sup>a</sup> " It must seem strange too, if our Lord had any Design to convince by these Works, that he should always be so remarkably upon the Reserve in that Respect, whenever he happened among unbelieving Company." Strange Assertion! Were they all Believers at the Marriage of *Cana* in *Galilee*? <sup>b</sup> Where was the remarkable Reserve in the Manner of raising *Lazarus* from the Dead, or the Widow's Son at *Nain*? Could any Thing be more publick, than the casting out the Devil which was blind and dumb<sup>c</sup>? The unbelieving Multitude

were

<sup>a</sup> Page 48.    <sup>b</sup> John ii. 12.    <sup>c</sup> Matt. xii. 22.

were amazed and affected; but some of the Pharisees, and others, far from commencing Believers, offended in an unpardonable Manner, by blaspheming the Divine Power by which these Miracles were performed. Can there be a more direct Contradiction to the Hypothesis here advanced, than our Saviour's Manner of upbraiding the Cities which had been the Scene of his Miracles. <sup>a</sup> “Wo unto thee *Chorazin*, wo unto thee *Bethsaida*, for if the mighty Works which were done in you, had been done in *Tyre* and *Sidon*, they had repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes.” Were not these Miracles publick and evident to the Infidel Inhabitants of those Places?

“ *HEROD*’s desiring to see some Sign done by him, we allow was not much to his Advantage <sup>b</sup>:” For this Want only arose from vain Curiosity. A cruel and profligate Prince had no Right to such a Gratification. Our Saviour well knew, nothing he could perform, would have any lasting good Effect; for the present his Sufferings might have been suspended, which it was now necessary should be compleatly finished.

YOUR last Remark is, “ Wherever we find them conferr’d, it was still first perceiving the Patient had Faith to be healed.” Surely it will be difficult to prove this in the Case of the Lame at *Bethesda*, and the blind Man sent to the Pool of *Siloam*: The contrary seemeth evident in the Case of Demoniacks, and of those to whom Healing was sent at a Distance.

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<sup>a</sup> *Matt. xi. 21.*<sup>b</sup> *Page 49.*<sup>c</sup> *Page 50.*

They who had an humble Reliance on his Power and Goodness, had a Right to such peculiar Favours. Very proper therefore was the Address to them: "According to your Faith be it unto you:" And "thy Faith hath made thee whole."

" If Miracles were necessary in the Infancy of the Gospel, they are so still, and will be to the End of the World." In the Beginning they were necessary, in order to procure Attention and Regard to new Doctrines, and to give Authority and Evidence to the first Missionaries: But in Countries where Christianity is the common Profession, and no such original Prejudices are to be surmounted, the ordinary Methods of Instruction are sufficient. " If they hear not *Moses* and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the Dead." The most faithful Narratives of Miracles cannot give them a primitive Strength and Evidence; but when Accounts of them are credibly conveyed, Time doth not weaken and disgrace their Sufficiency, in Point of Credit, in the Manner you assert<sup>b</sup>, " The Light of Conviction therefore, which is thus received, can extend no farther than to the Eye-witness himself, lost and extinguished the first Moment it is offered to be imparted." When the Credit of a History is well established, our Assent is due to Narratives of uncommon, as well as of common Facts. The Miracles of the *New Testament* were numerous, of great Variety, and many of them perform'd in a publick Manner: They on whose Credit we receive them, were under no Temptation

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to deceive from any temporal Advantages ; on the contrary, the Doctrine they propagated, exposed them to all Sorts of Inconveniencies and Sufferings. But not to insist on such obvious and well known Particulars, you must be reminded, that they have the very same Support as your true Principle. Is not the Narrative of these Facts more express and indisputable, than your Doctrine of Gospel Evidence ? Which remaineth now to be considered.

IT is submitted to the Publick, whether you have any Right to speak with so much Assurance <sup>a</sup>, “ Of the numerous and glaring Absurdities that follow so manifestly from the first View of the reasoning Scheme.” The Preliminary to your great Discovery is immediately before in these Words ; “ The God of Justice has assured us, both from our natural Idea of him, and his own positive Word, that he will require no more of his Creatures, than what he has given them Ability to perform.—The Belief of the Gospel is required under the severest Penalty,—it is our own Fault if we do not believe it.”

THE true Principle you assign in Scripture Terms <sup>b</sup>, “ No Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” It is obvious, that in explaining and representing your Sentiments here, you perpetually confound the Case of the Apostles and the first Professors of Christianity, with the Bulk of Mankind in all succeeding Ages of the World ; particularly the Assurances of miraculous and infallible Knowledge given to the Apostles, are applied to all Christians, from *John xv. 26.* “ The Spirit

<sup>a</sup> Page 55.

<sup>b</sup> Page 56.

“ Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the  
“ Father, he shall testify of me.” Again,  
“ When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will  
“ guide you into all Truth.”

THEY were endued with a Measure and Certainty of Knowledge peculiar to their Office, the Expectation of which in common Christians would be vain and presumptuous: They were inspired with true Faith, and possessed miraculous Powers; these strong and peculiar Assurances of the Spirit were necessary in order to accomplish the great and peculiar Work to which they were appointed; they were particularly promised immediately before his Passion <sup>b</sup>, and again immediately before his Ascension <sup>c</sup>. The Obedience of Faith and the renouncing of common Sense and Reason, in all Cases relating to Religion, is urged from Particulars which were miraculous and extraordinary. You aver, “ Disobedience of this Kind contrary to the whole Tenor of the Gospel:” Your Proof is, “ With what Severity does our Lord reprove the Sin of Infidelity in his Disciples, when their Vessel was actually sinking under them, and it had been from all Appearance a Sin against common Sense to have thought any otherwise? In like Manner was *Zacharias* struck dumb on the Spot, for only hesitating upon what carried, according to the common Course of Nature, the highest Face of Impossibility.” To these you add, *Abraham*’s believing in Hope against Hope. But it will be easy to make it appear, that the Want of a rational Faith

<sup>a</sup> *John* xvi. 13.    <sup>b</sup> *Chap. xiv. 26.*    <sup>c</sup> *Luke* xxiv. 49.  
<sup>d</sup> *Page* 78.

Faith was reproved in the two first Cases ; and a reasonable Dependance on the divine Promises is commended in the third. The Disciples had seen so many Instances of Power and Goodness in their Lord and Master, that had not their Fright rendered them incapable of attending to proper Considerations, they might readily have argued themselves into the Assurance of Safety, especially when they had before their Eyes the Miracle of his walking on the Water. Peter's Terror coming after the miraculous Support was afforded to him, deserved the severest Rebuke <sup>a</sup>. Whoever readeth the Manner in which the Angel appeared to *Zacharias*, and the Particulars which he delivered <sup>b</sup>, will find his Hesitating deserved the Punishment inflicted. It was easy to infer, that natural Incapacities were no Objections to the Truth of so supernatural a Message.

*ABRAHAM*'s Case, by a partial Quotation, is notoriously misrepresented. For, after Praises have been bestowed on the Strength and Steadiness of his Faith, we are informed of the Manner in which he reasoned himself into this Behaviour. " Being fully persuaded, that " what he had promised, he was able also to " perform." Many Passages have been and may be omitted, without any Injury to your main Argument. But what is introduced with so much solemn Assurance in the following Words, must not be neglected. " The Passage " that most fully, and beyond *all Possibility of* " *Misconception*, describes to us the true Nature " of Faith, in professed Opposition to that " mis-

<sup>a</sup> *Matt.* xiv. 29, 30.      <sup>b</sup> *Luke* i. 11, 12.      <sup>c</sup> *Rom.* iv. 21.      <sup>d</sup> *Page* 79.

“ mistaken Notion of a rational one, is in  
 “ *Rom. x. 6, 7, &c.*” How this is, beyond  
 all Possibility of *Misconception*, a Description of  
 the enthusiastical Persuasion, which you have  
 thought fit to dignify with the Character of  
 true Faith, will appear in a few Words. Hath  
 not this Impossibility of wrong Conception hap-  
 pened to some of our best Commentators? That  
 I may not be too tedious, I will only produce  
 Mr. *Locke*’s Note. --- “ *St. Paul* had told them,  
 “ <sup>2</sup> That the End of the Law was to bring  
 “ them to Life by Faith in Christ, that they  
 “ might be justified, and so be saved. To  
 “ convince them of this, he brings three  
 “ Verses out of the Book of the Law itself,  
 “ declaring, that the Way to Life was by  
 “ harkening to that Word which was ready  
 “ in their Mouth, and in their Heart; that  
 “ therefore they had no Reason to reject Jesus  
 “ Christ, because he died and was removed  
 “ into Heaven, and was remote from them;  
 “ their very Law proposed Life to them by  
 “ something nigh them, that might lead them  
 “ to their Deliverer, by Words and Doctrines  
 “ that might always be at Hand, in their  
 “ Mouths and in their Hearts, and so lead  
 “ them to Christ, *i. e.* to that Faith in him  
 “ which the Apostle preached to them.” Were  
 we not laid by you under a Prohibition, with  
 Regard to all rational Appeals, in Things ap-  
 pertaining to Faith, we should presume to say,  
 you have produced Sounds, but have neglected  
 Sense and Meaning. Strong Assertions, and  
 positive Declarations, are Proofs only in the  
 Op-

Opinion of those who are willing and prepared to receive any sort of Satisfaction.

THE Manner of some, in allowing Christians to examine, we have, *Page* 87, which concludeth—"In God's Name, judge freely all of you " for yourselves ; but then be sure to judge all " of you just as we do, or expect to stand to the " Consequence, &c." This Behaviour is represented by you in strong and lively Terms in the following Pages. Its Absurdity and Inconsistency is particularly exposed *Page* 95 ; "What " they mean by inviting us to dispute on reli- " gious Subjects, shall appear at last to imply " no more than this, That we are to dispute " for, but not against them." What is continued to *Page* 96, containeth Remonstrances and Reasonings, which well deserve the attentive Consideration of those whom they do more especially concern. "Woe to the World, " because of Offences ; for it must needs be, " that Offences come, &c." \* "The civil " Magistrate's taking upon him—to inculcate " the same particular Belief,—is produced as " a plain Proof,—that they were satisfied in " themselves, that Reason was never designed " to have any Share in the Office." The Magistrate has not only undertaken to oblige his Subjects to Conformity in Christian Countries, but in other Places, before and since the Establishment of Christianity. Many and just have been the Complaints against his Method and Manner of Proceeding. Meek, mild and merciful, was the Behaviour of the great Author of our Religion ; and of the same Nature, all his Precepts and Directions. But severe

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and

and inhuman have many Laws been, and they have been executed with unrelenting Rigour, as necessary Supports to Christianity. Such have been the Measures not only against its professed Enemies, but against Christians of different Distinctions and Denominations. Barbarities, equally horrible with those which have raged among the most barbarous Nations, have by this Means been committed in the Christian World. The highest Assurance of the infallible Inspiration of Truth being afforded to the Magistrate, is no Justification of a Conduct, which is a direct Contradiction of his Ways and Laws, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

It hath from hence been inferred, that since religious Affairs have been so improperly administered, the Magistrate should here have no Care nor Concern. But is not this too hasty and forward? His having no Right to punish, excepting in Instances where the Welfare of Society is directly and plainly affected, is readily granted. But are all Encouragements and Supports in religious Affairs improper? The Impropriety is supposed to be clearly made out; because amongst the Variety of Religions which are in the World, one only can be true; and consequently this Influence must, with a single Exception, be constantly wrong applied. To superstitious Rites, to frivolous and unimportant Forms and Modes, the Name of the true Church and Religion hath too commonly been given; and hither have all Views and Regards been directed. But had the plain and more unexceptionable Points been chiefly considered, and the weightier Matters of the Law, thus the

the Care of the Magistrate might have proved a Blessing to the World.

WHAT is advanced <sup>a</sup> with Regard to University Education, and parental Instructions, is now to be considered. To my Superiors I leave the Defence of early Impositions and Subscriptions, not likely to be truly understood by those to whom they are offered. Departing afterwards from the strict Sense of what is thus enjoined, occasioneth Reproaches; but not always with Justice and Truth. For who can promise and assure, especially in such an Affair, with Regard to Futurity?

WHEN parental Instruction is managed agreeably to the Spirit of the Gospel, there is nothing so unfair as is supposed. They who teach Children Hatred and Contempt of those who differ from them, and to guard their own Opinions with Pride and Positiveness, infect their Minds with Vice and Irreligion, while they pretend to give them Notions of Piety and Virtue. It has been often urged, that in order to proceed equitably in the Method of Education, all the Advantages and Disadvantages of a religious Persuasion ought to be proposed without any Diminution. To practical Goodness this Observation cannot be applied. All the favourable Views and Arguments ought to be proposed to Youth, in the strongest Manner, on the Side of Piety and Virtue. In the School of the World, they will soon hear Lessons of a quite different Strain; and will be perpetually taught to do Evil by a Variety of Examples.

IT is an Advantage to the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity to give them the first Possession of the Mind. But this Observation is chiefly verified in the unthinking Part of Mankind. This is indeed so prodigious a Majority, as hardly to deserve the Name of a Part, since almost the Whole cometh under this Denomination.

EVEN in the learned World, I mean, those who have had a learned Education, how inconsiderable is the Number who are either able, or willing, or dare to think? Now since such as these are almost wholly passive, having no Desires, no Designs, to fetch in Materials for thinking, what happeneth to this idle and indolent Herd, is of small Importance. They never can be possessed of real Knowledge. Insignificant Sounds are their only Accomplishments. As for those who consider and shew themselves Men, who accustom themselves to Reflections and Reviews, and who are under no Terrors, either from temporal or spiritual Powers, with them Prepossession is not a very important Point. They are peculiarly cautious in examining what was suggested to them in the Days of their Ignorance, and become prejudiced rather against than for such early Notices. If old Opinions have an Advantage, so is there a great one from Novelty. For is not this a known and sensible Recommendation? The Affectation of delivering something new, and making Opposition to the common Sense of Mankind, have been the chief Occasions of the highest Diffensions, and the strongest Parties. A proper Temper of Mind, and proper Circumstances, for receiving and obeying the

Truth, are rare and uncommon. But we are not therefore to despair; nor to despise, nor to neglect the Truth.

WHAT you have offered against all worthy and useful Attempts, to explain and defend the Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, deserveth a particular Reply. Let us attend to it as it appeareth in several Parts of your Performance. <sup>a</sup> "The unquiet Essays of Reasoning, curious Disquisitions upon his Being and Attributes, and the Truth and Authentickness of Revelation, are Practices utterly inconsistent with the Pretensions of all such as call themselves Christians." After observing on the learned Calculations of *Daniel's Weeks*, and the Analogy of Reason and Revelation, you thus deliver your Opinion; <sup>b</sup> "I consider these, as in Truth they are, Inventions of late Date, and therefore at best superfluous." Again, <sup>c</sup> "Even upon the plainest Question in Nature, the Existence of a Deity itself, the Subject of the World where all Men, as it is owned, must needs naturally believe, if left fairly to themselves and uninstructed, may one not venture boldly to affirm—that all the Productions of Dr. *Clarke* have made for the other Side of the Question, and raised a thousand Difficulties, which else would never have occurred."

You add afterwards, "That the hearing these Subjects canvassed freely, tho' never so much to their Advantage in Point of Argument, is a very dangerous Practice, and a great weakening to all religious Attachments, which

“ which are established on so much better  
“ Ground.”

IN Consequence of this Way of Thinking, you pronounce what hath been the evil Event of Mr. *Boyle's* Lectures. “ His Design was laudable and pious---The Scheme has, in the Event, proved more radically injurious to the Cause of Piety, and more fatally instrumental in unhinging all religious Principles, than any, that the Art and the Malice of Religion's worst Enemies could ever have devised.”

To Persons who have attained to your high Degree of Faith, and who have the religious Sensations you recommend, such Instructions and Informations are perfectly disagreeable. They have all within, and want nothing external. But were not *Grotius's* Intentions good and proper, when he undertook the Defence of the Christian Religion? His Countrymen, by their extended Commerce with *Pagans* and *Mahometans*, heard and saw many Things quite opposite to the Christian Doctrine. Was it needless to prepare them to make a Reply to the many Invectives and Objections with which they were entertained? Was nothing to be offered to prevent their being seduced? Were they to give no Account of the Reason of their Faith and Practice? Is nothing to be done but having Recourse to your Principle? And thus, they were only to denounce Damnation against Infidels, and to maintain their own Belief, by revolving in their Minds the Horrors of Woe, which would be the Consequence of their

their departing from it. The *Jews* still remain a numerous Body of People, dispersed throughout the Face of the Earth; are Their Labours to be treated with Contempt, who have attempted their Conversion by several Methods of Reasoning, and particularly by Explanations of *Daniel's* Weeks? Or is it of no Importance to Christianity to dispose into Order, and to place in proper Lights, the Evidences we have of the Resurrection?

“ THE Existence of a Deity (you aver) is “ what all Men must naturally believe, if left “ to themselves.” Have there then never been any Atheists in the World? Did *Clarke* and others invent the Objections and Difficulties which they have produced, only in order to shew their Skill and Abilities in their Solutions and Answers? Are they to be blamed for what they have so well performed, and to so good Purpose? Were the many important Adversaries and their Adherents, to glory in their Objections as unanswerable? Is this fundamental Article of all Religion to be given up, as not capable of any Defence, and as what cannot be made out by any good Proofs? Are we not to enter into the Consideration of those Arguments we have of the invisible Being, from the Things which are the Objects of Sense? By searching into the Works of God, are we not, when we have discovered Evidences of the Artificer of all Things, to produce and explain them? When metaphysical Arguments have been offered in a mathematical Way, in order to remove the Foundations of all our Hopes, is it faulty to make Replies to such

such Adversaries, and to endeavour the Establishment of what they have endeavoured to destroy ?

WHEN Opposition is made to the Truth and Authentickness of a Revelation, then Defences become necessary. But if no satisfactory Answers can be given, if all Attempts in the Way of Apology make the Thing worse, why are we to submit with so much Reverence to an Authority, which cannot be supported ? You learn, and can pretend only from hence to learn the Truth of your great Principle. But shall we hearken to an Instructor in any Case, but especially in this, so contrary to common Sense and Reason, whose Credit becometh more doubtful after the best Defences ?

THE Consequences which follow from your Doctrine not only to the Disadvantage, but to the Destruction of Natural as well as Revealed Religion, do not require any laboured Explanation. The Intention of a Writer of your Ability and Addres is obvious to common Observation : The Manner in which your Principle is proposed, proved, and illustrated, is a full Intimation what your real Sentiments are, of the Truth and Importance of this Gospel Evidence. On your own Account, it is therefore needless to offer any Observations : But as there are Numbers in the World, far from being Masters of your cool and deliberate Way of Thinking, who have practically entertained with great Sincerity your enthusiastick Speculations, I will offer some Reflexions on this Kind of Evidence. Particular Notice must be taken of the Manner in which you have managed it.

You

You tell us<sup>a</sup>, "The Motive which induces Men to believe the Gospel, is the peculiar Grant and Munificence of Heaven, over and above the common Privileges of Nature." Again, <sup>b</sup> "Such a full and home-felt Persuasion, as will render superfluous all farther Care, and purposed Labour in the Search."—From such Accounts and Declarations as these, the universal Effect and Influence of your Faith may justly be expected: How shall we answer the Inquiry, why this is not so in Fact, but by supposing the Limitation of this Favour to a few was fixed from Eternity, by an irresistible Decree? Or if we consider it as a Transaction of Time, how can we forbear apprehending something arbitrary and capricious in such a Behaviour; or that there is a Defect of Power or Goodness? Your Solution of the Difficulty we have *Page* 63; "The universal Tender of this Conviction, however potent in its Influence, must yet depend greatly on the proper Disposition of our Minds to give it Reception for its Efficacy." But how is this consistent with the Account you give—"of this Persuasion which renders *superfluous all farther Care?*"—You seem afterwards to forget the Necessity of this previous Disposition, and to suppose this supernatural Gift bestowed on all; on the most unthinking and unconcerned, as well as upon those, who have the most ardent Wishes and Desires.

THIS appeareth from your Representation of  
the Proceedings of our religious, publick As-  
semblies.

semblies. <sup>a</sup> " These unanimous Confessors have " never bestowed, in their whole Lives, one " single Thought in a speculative Way, on " the Truth or Falshood of all that long Train " of Propositions they so liberally avow." — Your easy Account of this Proceeding is, — " That it can be only the Effect of the same " Spirit, that from the Lips of them all con- " triveth to speak the same Thing, that by " this Means, tho' Men cannot be all of one " Opinion, they may be of one Faith." — Where is the proper Disposition of Mind in the Generality of the Votaries of an extensive District? Doth not the Spirit come down upon them without any Call, without any Knowledge, without any Expectation on their Part, or any Consciousness of their contributing to so divine a Gift?

You account for the Magistrate's prescribing in Religion, from spiritual and supernatural Information, <sup>b</sup> " His Understanding, naturally " considered, has no Pre-eminence." — " If he " drew his Tenets from no better a Founda- " tion than his own Reason, he can have no " Manner of Pretension to expect an implicit " Deference from me." — " It is far otherwise, " if we will suppose, whenever we see him " exerting such an Authority, that our Pray- " ers have taken Effect on his Behalf, and that " he is ever prevented in his Choice, by the " unerring Instructions of the Holy Spirit." — You talk of " the Consciousness of his inspi- " red Certainty, as the only Justification of " his Proceedings." — Must we suppose this supernatural Ability and Consciousness to be

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constantly connected with his Office? You take no Notice of any previous Disposition of his Thoughts and Heart for the Reception of such miraculous Accomplishments: All these are wholly ascribed to the Prayer of others. In his private Character, he may be as ignorant, irreligious, and immoral as possible; but by Virtue of publick Litanies, in his publick Capacity, he must needs be infallible and unerring in all Regulations relating to Religion.

WHETHER you ever intended to be serious and consistent in these and many other Particulars, is of easy Observation to every intelligent Reader; but in no Place do you more strongly express *your real Purpose*, than *Page 72*, "How much true Zeal and Acuteness  
"shine forth in Breasts unadvantaged with the  
"minutest Portion of human Talents or Ac-  
"quirements?"—It is far from being wonderful, that Zeal should have a Residence in such Breasts; but Acuteness is your peculiar Discovery.

SOME Notice has been taken already of what you have advanced *Page 63*; your Argument there, and *Page 64*, in order to prove Infidelity to be criminal, deserveth to be cleared and settled: "The proper Disposition of Mind to give Faith Reception, becometh indeed a Test of Obedience; whereas the arbitrary Determinations of Reason are well known to be Events intirely out of our Power."—Whether we will attend to, and procure full and proper Evidence, according to the Appearance and Strength of which all our Reasonings are governed, is in our Power: And agreeably to our good or bad Behaviour, as ra-

tional Beings, we become innocent or criminal. Human Minds there are, and have been well disposed, by being freed from Pride, Passion, and Prejudice, who yet have not been, able to attain to the Kind and Degree of Faith which you recommend. Many truly devout and humble cannot agree with you <sup>a</sup>, " in thinking Absurdities the strongest Presumption possible in its Favour :" Can any one give his Assent willingly and heartily, while his Understanding suggesteth to him the strongest Suspicions of Absurdity and Impossibility ? Professions and Declarations are possible, not so with regard to inward Sentiment.

ON Truth, and Obligation to assent to it, you have delivered several remarkable Things. *Page 18*, after taking Notice of Mr. Addison's Proofs, by which you acknowledge, " he has evinced, beyond all Contradiction, the Truth of the Sacred Writings :" You add, " the Truth of the History is by no Means the Matter in Question, but my Obligation to assent to it.—It is one Thing whether a Proposition be true in itself, and another, whether a Man be bound to apprehend and believe it." Again, when you are repeating in a summary Way <sup>b</sup>, " However plausibly Christianity may be inforced as a Fact, it can yet never be true as a Gospel, in Virtue of any Argument deduced from Reasoning."— What you have delivered *Page 19*, as to " the Truth of the Gospel shining out so conspicuously,—and yet appearing otherwise to the rude and short-sighted Understandings of many :—As to its being liable to be often

" mis-

“ misconceived, &c.” All these Things do not appear sufficient Explanations of your general Assertions. You have furnished the Lazy and Careless with ample Excuses for not assenting to numerous Truths of the most important Kind. Propositions of an indifferent Nature, and in which the Welfare of Mankind, neither here nor hereafter, is in any Degree concerned, we are not bound to apprehend and believe. But when the Case is quite different, Attention and Application are proper and necessary. The Truth of the Gospel History is a very material Point in Question. If Christianity may be inforced as a Fact, must it not be true as a Gospel, in Virtue of good Arguments deduced from Reason? In any other considerable Affair, should we require stronger and better Motives to engage our Assent? Why are they then weak and insignificant, because Religion is concerned?

IN your Recapitulation of the Argument, *Page 109*, you have blended together Truth and Fallacies, the Doctrine of the *New Testament*, and human Commandments.

MENS being of one Mind, absolutely and strictly speaking, is never to be expected during the present State of Things. Temporal Hopes and Fears, irregular Appetites and Passions, and many other evil Motives and Habits, corrupt the Understanding, and are the Occasion of the Differences and Dissensions which abound in the World. From pure and undisturbed Reason alone are we to expect the agreeable Fruits of Peace and Unanimity. Not the Expectation of miraculous and supernatural Assurances, but the making the best Use of

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our common and natural Advantages is our present Duty. In being thus employed, we may hope for Favours and Blessings from Heaven. No extraordinary Accomplishments are necessary to the understanding of true Christianity. Did not Men notoriously abuse and neglect their Time and Parts, they might have these in much greater Proportion for the Purposes of Religion.

Is it indeed doing Honour to God, to suppose we become acceptable to him, by renouncing our most distinguishing Excellency in the most exalted and excellent Affair of Religion? Is this the peculiar Glory of the Gospel Revelation, that it teacheth us to cultivate warm Affections and blind Zeal; to have a steady and strong Faith, but not to presume to inquire why or what we believe? By Children, Ideots, and ignorant *Pagans*, when they can once pronounce the Words, Creeds may be repeated. Now, tho' they cannot connect Sense with their Words, do they commence Believers, by having an unaccountable Liking and Affection for these Sounds? With you, this seems the chief Requisite in Faith. For, <sup>a</sup> “ It is equally necessary at every Period <sup>“</sup> of our Lives,--- and we are to go through <sup>“</sup> no Course of Proofs, tho' never so obvious, <sup>“</sup> to give it Credit and Authority with us.” Afterwards, <sup>b</sup> “ Even with Regard to the most <sup>“</sup> competent Judges, it is impossible to con- <sup>“</sup> ceive any the least Connexion betwixt the <sup>“</sup> Notion of Duty and assenting rationally to any <sup>“</sup> Proposition ever so strongly supported.” It is, we acknowledge, not an uncommon Thing for Men

Men to have a rational Persuasion of Propositions, representing their Faith and Obedience, and yet to remain very wicked, and Professors of Infidelity. Knowledge and Truth in the Head is not always attended with the Obedience of Faith and a holy Life. This is the Case when domineering Interests, Passions, and evil Habits prevail. But all Men, of upright Hearts and clear Heads, easily conceive the Connexion betwixt a Proposition being rationally evident, and those Duties which are to follow. When speculative Truths are proved and explained, if we attend to, and are satisfied with what is offered, is not our Faith thus engaged? Proper Notices of our religious and moral Behaviour are gained, by considering the Truth and Reasonableness of those Propositions which contain the Particulars of our Duty. To act agreeably to them, is the Business of a willing and obedient Mind.

YOUR Representations of the Nature of the uncertain Efficacy of Argument, and of the Judgments of Men speculatively disposed, have the Appearances of something considerable. You are here talking of a complicated Argument; now what are we to understand by "its being sufficiently calculated to extort an " Assent from every one that hears it?"---Do you really think there is such Force and commanding Power in any Argument of a religious and moral Kind? Humility, Peace, and Self-denial, are expressly recommended by the Example and Doctrine of the great Author and Finisher of our Faith. But Pride and Insolence, Wrath and Strife, Covetousness and

Ambition, have too commonly infected the Lives of the most eminent and distinguished Professors of Christianity.

ALLUSIONS to Facts, Usages and Customs, make several Places of the *New Testament* of difficult and uncertain Interpretation. But all the necessary Doctrines therein contained, and whatever is written for our Instruction and Correction in Righteousness, are plain and easy. And yet the Comments and Devices of Men have from hence formed Opinions of a mysterious and unintelligible Nature. How hath divine Wisdom been darkened by Words without Knowledge? Hence the Hardships and Discouragements in the Way of Christian Knowledge and Faith. Thus, what is useful, comfortable, and a most reasonable Service, is represented as dark, dismal, and only to be regarded with Horror and Veneration. And all we perform is to be the Effect of a blind and implicit Obedience.

“ **S**UCH are the Returns made unto him, who  
“ has shewed thee, O Man! what is good; and  
“ what the Lord thy God doth require of thee.”

NOTWITHSTANDING what human Policy hath decreed to the contrary, and the gloomy Suspicions of Melancholy or Enthusiasm, of no natural Rights and Liberties of Judging are we deprived by Christianity. All Sorts of Force and Constraint, of Fear and Suspicion, are greatly to the Dishonour of true Faith. If it is not our free and willing Choice, how can it be a true and lively Faith? Greater Prejudices cannot be formed against the Merit of any Religion, than forbidding all Reasoning and Examination. When these are represented

fented as the Sayings of the Gospel, can any Thing be more to its Disadvantage? Are they “ faithful and true, and worthy of all Accep-  
“ tion ? ”

I MIGHT proceed in Reflections of this Kind: But enough hath been said to those who are willing to attend, and with fair upright Intentions inquire after Truth. As for those who in Despair have given over all Search, or who despise all Pretensions to Truth; and for others, who, on the contrary, are sure and satisfied, upon only presuming Things are true; labouring with such is vain, and to no Purpose.

WHAT you have produced from Bishop *Beveridge*, <sup>a</sup> as far as his Name and Authority is of any Weight, is strong in Support of your Doctrine. On my Side I have Oracles who had much better Heads, and who were equally hearty in the Cause of Christianity. But what Archbishop *Tillotson* and others have delivered is so well known, that it is wholly needless to make any Quotations.

WHAT you have presented us with, in your Title Page, from a *Pagan* Philosopher, is not so fair, and truly to your Purpose, as what we have from this Christian Bishop. What *Cotta* delivereth in the third Book, are not the Sentiments to which *Cicero*’s Judgment inclined. For this is his Remark on the Whole. --- *Hæc cum essent dicta, ita diceſſimus, ut Velleio Cottæ Disputatio verior, mibi Balbi ad veritatis ſimilitudinem videretur eſſe propenſior.* Nor are we to suppose every Thing there said was *Cotta*’s fixed and real Opinion, ſince thus

he beginneth--- *Itaque cogito, ut dixi, non tam refellere ejus Orationem, quam ea, quæ minus intellecti, requirere.* And this is his Conclusion--- *Hæc ferè dicere habui de naturâ Deorum, non ut eam tollerem, sed ut intelligeretis, quam esset obscura, & quam difficiles explicatus haberet.* But suppose these and many other great Names of Antiquity were on your Side, it only verifieth a common Observation, That there is nothing so foolish and absurd, which some Philosopher or other hath not asserted. The Amount of this Doctrine is, that the brutal is better than the human Nature, and that the best State of all is, to be quite devoid of Sense as well as Understanding. How notorious is the Fallacy, when he ascribeth all publick and private Vices and Villanies to Reason; since the Dictates of Reason are strong and express against such a Behaviour? True it is, if they were not rational Agents, of These, Men would not be capable. But at this Rate of Arguing, Life and Existence are Evils. *Cotta* is indeed as much against being a Rationalist in Religion as you are.--- *Mibi enim unum sat erat, ita Majores nostros tradidisse; sed tu auctoritates contemnis, ratione pugnas.*--- And in many other Places to the same Purpose. As *Cicero* has expressed his Inclination to *Balbus*'s Opinion, I will add his Sense of the Affair.--- *Eorum scilicet Animantium, quæ ratione utuntur. Hi sunt Di & Homines, quibus profecto nihil est melius; ratio est enim quæ præstat omnibus*<sup>a</sup>.

I HAVE now expressed my Sense of Things, and wherein and why I differ from you. As I have endeavoured to avoid all indecent Reflections,

tions, it is hoped, there have not many Offences of this Kind been committed. If there are such Appearances, they were not wilful, and therefore may expect to be excused.

To your concluding Advice, I will add a Caution from the same Authority; “ Cease, “ my Son, to hear the Instruction, that causeth “ to err from the Words of Knowledge.”

*Cambridge, June 11, 1742.*

*P. S.* IT is not material to inform the Reader, by what Accidents the Publication of this Letter hath been delayed.

**F I N I S.**

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that the administration and business to be  
done will now begin, and that the  
Institutes of Justice will be  
the law I, which will be  
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the law of the land, and the  
Institutes of Justice will be  
done in a month and a half or two  
months, and will be followed by

## Digitized by srujanika@gmail.com

1. *Malacothrix* 2. *Malacothrix* 3. *Malacothrix*

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